

**BEFORE THE  
PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION  
OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
UTILITIES COMMISSION**

DOCKET NO. 2014-246-E

**In Re: Petition to Establish  
Generic Proceeding Pursuant to the  
Distributed Energy Resource  
Program Act,  
Act No. 236 of 2014,  
Ratification No. 241,  
Senate Bill No. 1189**

**REPLY OF  
THE ALLIANCE FOR  
SOLAR CHOICE**

Pursuant to R. 103-829 of the Rules of Practice and Procedure of the Public Service Commission of South Carolina ("Commission"), the Alliance for Solar Choice ("TASC"), submits this Reply to the Joint Response of Duke Energy Carolinas, LLC, Duke Energy Progress, Inc., South Carolina Electric & Gas Company (collectively, the "Utilities"). The Utilities filed their Joint Response in opposition of TASC's Motion to Compel information about net metering program applications and interconnection that is critical to understand aggregate market activity, appropriately plan for when the net metering cap is met, is consistent with best practices for transparency and data-sharing in other states, and builds upon - but does not violate - the existing net metering settlement.

TASC generally reiterates that the net metering cap is fast approaching - indeed, faster than was originally contemplated in the Settlement Agreement<sup>1</sup> - and as a result, more frequent and thorough data must be shared publicly and transparently to inform

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<sup>1</sup>SCE&G and Duke have both surpassed their 1.0% participation levels as of September and November 2017, respectively.

South Carolina's ratepayers and the nearly 3,000 South Carolina workers currently employed by its thriving solar industry.<sup>2</sup> We take this opportunity to respond to specific parts of the Utilities' Joint Response below, and we thank the Commission for its consideration of this Reply.

In their Joint Response, the Utilities assert that they have shared adequate net metering enrollment data with select stakeholders on a number of occasions. However, we point out that South Carolina ratepayers trying to decide if and when to go solar are not party to those closed-door meetings, nor are all employers whose workforces could be impacted by a change in NEM cap timing. This is about jobs in South Carolina - how many more can be created and how many are at risk of ending - as well as transparent information for prospective solar customers who wish to plan and save money on their electric bills. This information needs to be reported publicly and transparently, as well as more frequently.

We acknowledge that the Utilities may be "working towards producing"<sup>3</sup> monthly updates on their websites, but establishing a reporting schedule on the record allows for predictable administration for everyone. We take issue with the Utilities' comment that publicly reporting the requested information "would be overly burdensome on the Companies' resources." Our experience working with other utilities across the country on this issue has shown that this data is - or should be - readily available, and the

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<sup>2</sup> At the time this Reply was filed, The Solar Foundation reported there were 2,772 solar jobs in the state of South Carolina, which had increased by 57% in 2016. Report available at <https://www.thesolarfoundation.org/solar-jobs-census/factsheet-2016-sc/>.

<sup>3</sup> "...SCE&G confirmed with ORS that SCE&G would *work towards* the requested monthly updates on its website, and that it *might* be available in December 2017 or January 2018." Joint Response at p. 4 (emphasis added).

marginal effort required to post it on a website should not be overly burdensome, certainly not when compared to the current concerns about the accuracy of information submitted to this very Commission.<sup>4</sup> South Carolinians deserve public transparency now more than ever.

Instead of acknowledging their responsibility to remain transparent to their own ratepayers, the Utilities attempt to shift the onus to the solar industry and argue that TASC is in a better position to predict when the NEM cap will be met than the Utilities themselves. This is unreasonable for a number of reasons, a few being that this is not our data to share, TASC is only part of the solar industry in the state, and the lack of transparent utility data is exactly why we made this filing in the first place. While TASC is not in the position to best understand how close the Utilities are to meeting their NEM cap, we *are* in the position to best know what data would be most helpful in preparing the solar industry, its workers, and its prospective customers. We need the four data points we originally requested in our Motion to Compel, specifically:

- Net metering applications received during the current month (number of applications and MW)
- Net metering applications in the queue (number of applications and MW)
- Interconnections approved during the current month (number of interconnections and MW)
- Total cumulative interconnections (number of interconnections and MW)

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<sup>4</sup> Andrew Brown and Thad Moore, *Insight that would've alerted problems with nuclear project scrubbed from audit two years ago*, The Post and Courier (Nov. 22, 2017), available at [https://www.postandcourier.com/business/insight-that-would-ve-alerted-problems-with-nuclear-project-scrubbed/article\\_691272a4-cf0f-11e7-a289-bf59c8d8d969.html](https://www.postandcourier.com/business/insight-that-would-ve-alerted-problems-with-nuclear-project-scrubbed/article_691272a4-cf0f-11e7-a289-bf59c8d8d969.html).

The Utilities' response illustrates the scenario in which "the [Utilities] will continue to review applications up until the point where the cap is met, and at such point, the next customer's application will be notified [and denied] accordingly."<sup>5</sup> TASC is requesting additional data be made publicly available so the industry and the public can better foresee the timing of this abrupt change. We are not in the business of employees reporting to work to find out that their jobs no longer exist.<sup>6</sup> Taking this state by complete surprise when the NEM cap has been reached is in nobody's best interest.

Finally, we again acknowledge the fact that all parties to the Settlement Agreement agreed to certain reporting requirements leading up to the point at which the 2% NEM cap contemplated in Act 236 is achieved. The settlement parties agreed to those reporting parameters; however, in practice, the resulting reports are not helping ratepayers, the solar industry, or lawmakers currently considering legislation regarding the NEM cap understand when the NEM cap will actually be hit. Not only are the reports based on interconnections and not applications, but timing has changed and is moving faster than was envisioned during that settlement.<sup>7</sup> There is reason to believe that the NEM cap will be reached in half the amount of time contemplated by the Settlement Agreement; however, by not regularly providing up-to-date application data, the Utilities are impeding customers and stakeholders from having an accurate understanding of NEM availability.

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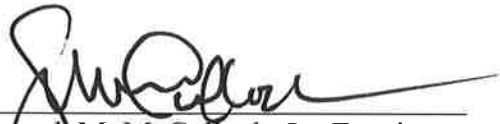
<sup>5</sup> Joint Response at pp. 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> *Thousands Without a Job Following V.C. Summer Construction Shutdown*, WLTX (July 31, 2017), available at <http://www.wltx.com/news/local/thousands-without-a-job-following-vc-summer-construction-shut-down/460900577>.

<sup>7</sup> The NEM Settlement contemplated the NEM cap being reached at the end of 2020, when the reporting requirements expired; however, based on the limited data available from the Utilities, it could be reached much faster; *see supra* footnote 1.

While the NEM Settlement Agreement established a baseline or bare minimum for data reporting, nothing in the Settlement Agreement should be construed as constraining the authority of the Commission to require more robust data reporting as needed to serve and protect the public interest. In this case, the requested additional reporting is needed because parties' efforts to access this data independent of the Commission have been unsuccessful, and the data is necessary to keep South Carolina's ratepayers and solar workforce properly informed. Thus we respectfully ask that the Commission expediently grant our motion and ensure this data is available and accessible to its public.

Respectfully,



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